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The Alabama State Funded Post-Baccalaureate Nursing Scholarship Program: An Outcomes Study

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The Alabama State Funded Post-Baccalaureate
Nursing Scholarship Program: An Outcomes Study

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

Alabama is credited with being the only state that has a law designating funding for graduate nurse education scholarships, particularly one administered by its nursing regulatory agency (Code of Alabama, 1975 Section 34-21-60; Alabama Administrative Code, Chapter 610-X-11). The law, established in 1977, authorized the Alabama Board of Nursing to award 15 graduate nurse scholarships in the amount of \$3,800 each on an annual basis. The Board is held accountable for assuring the requirements of the law are met in the administration of the program. As a matter of quality control, the Board initially authorized a study to determine: (1) if the program outcomes were consistent with law, (2) characteristics of the population across time, (3) application of education to practice, and (4) perceived value of the scholarship program. A decision was also made to assess needs for financial support for graduate nursing education in Alabama in view of workforce concerns.

Background

Although the law itself did not specify a particular target for the scholarships, verbal accounts indicate an initial high priority need for advanced educationally prepared nurse faculty (Taped interview with Dr. Jean Kelley, former Dean of the Graduate Program, University of Alabama School of Nursing at Birmingham, 1999). This priority has been reframed as changes in health care delivery have occurred. According to a study by Fordham, Hinz, Kelley, O'Sullivan, and Kitchens (1985), the situation was critical in 1975 to increase the output of master prepared graduates and to educate the many faculty teaching in associate degree programs who held only the baccalaureate degree. As the only school offering graduate nursing education in 1975, The University of Alabama at Birmingham secured a federal grant to provide outreach master's degree in nursing programs. These programs were developed cooperatively with other state institutions of higher education.

Funds were not secured for student financial aid; therefore, state funding was sought. The Alabama Legislature responded by passing a bill to provide for post-baccalaureate scholarships. Built into the law was a stipulation requiring that the recipient work in Alabama at least one year following program completion. The law also specified qualifications for the scholarship, including Alabama residency for at least one year prior to application, holding a baccalaureate degree in nursing from an accredited baccalaureate degree program, being a person of good character and acceptance for matriculation into an accredited Alabama graduate nursing program. The selection of recipients from qualified applicants necessarily focused on geographic distribution without consideration of demographic factors.

The 1985 study (Fordham, et al.) indicated that funds were allocated to 115 scholarship recipients from 1977 - 1985. Of these, 41 of 104 respondents worked for educational programs during their first year of employment, and 31 of 104 were employed in an educational role at the time the study ended. All but three of the other recipients were employed in the workforce in a variety of clinical settings. The three recipients did not fulfill the one-year work requirement. A majority stated they could not have pursued their advanced work without the aid of the scholarship.

As the outreach programs were phased out in 1983, the three cooperative universities established their own graduate nursing education programs: University of Alabama at Huntsville, University of South Alabama, and Troy State University. Since 1985 four other institutions, the University of Alabama, Samford University, the University of Mobile, and Jacksonville State University, have implemented graduate nursing education programs.

With eight graduate programs in nursing in Alabama one might surmise that there would be sufficient graduates to meet health care delivery needs. This has not proven to be the case to date. Deficits in health care delivery, particularly accessibility for vulnerable populations, have created a great need for nurses at all levels including advanced practice nurses. Additionally, concerns have been expressed by the federal government regarding deficits in faculty who are prepared to teach in advanced practice curricula (Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice, HRSA, 1997). Of eight Alabama institutions offering graduate nursing education programs, two provide an education track. Reviews of educational programs during routine surveys and deficit surveys by the Board of Nursing indicate that there is a need for graduate education to help develop teachers for undergraduate and graduate nursing education as well as to develop advanced clinical practitioners.

Compounding these concerns are hard-core projections of nursing shortages. Buerhaus, Staiger, and Auerbach (2000; 2000), citing the monthly U.S. Bureau of Census Current Population Surveys 1983-1999, validated the increasing age of nurses as the primary predictor for the shortage. Other variables that impact the aging nurse population include increasing demands of society for access to health care, a burgeoning aging population, and demands of organizations for registered nurses due to high patient acuity, older patients, increasing technology, productivity, efficiency and accountability. Other factors include economic incentives; regulatory factors and emerging competition; expanding career opportunities for women; and declining interest in nursing (Buerhaus, 2001; Auerbach, Staiger, and Buerhaus, 2000) with resultant declines in enrollments in nursing education programs. (NLN and AACN News 2000).

In Alabama, higher education is financially repressed. Deficits in funding impact all higher education programs, particularly those in which outside sources of funding are less available. Disciplines such as nursing are pressured to increase enrollments with no increase in budget. Attracting licensees to return to school to obtain a graduate degree is difficult if financial incentives are limited or not available. With respect for the unique contributions from the State for its

continued funding of the scholarship program, the number of scholarships has not increased since 1977, nor has the amount awarded per recipient increased. At times, legislative allocations have impacted the actual amount specified in the law through proration of funds.

A recent survey (2000) of the administrators of colleges or schools of graduate nursing education in Alabama indicated the need for financial assistance for graduate students in nursing is critical. One administrator capsuled it as follows: "The amount of financial aid and scholarships used by our students continues to increase each year. Graduate students are usually self-supporting; thus, they have to use their own resources to pay for their education. However, they often have young families to support and cannot pay for both family expenses and education costs. Nursing practice in today's health care facilities and the nature of nursing education are too complex and demanding to do both well. Therefore, financial assistance is a MUST, especially with the low salaries of nurses in comparison to other professions."

The 1985 study (Fordham, et al.) evidenced that the funds for the post-baccalaureate scholarships funded by the State of Alabama were applied as the law intended. This study again focused on determining compliance with the law, and qualitatively related data obtained from the recipients of the scholarships with assessments by graduate program administrators of needs for continuance of the scholarship program.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study design was descriptive in nature. Two questionnaires were the vehicles for securing data. The first instrument was developed by Board of Nursing staff and content validated by outside consultants for accuracy and clarity. It was introduced to the study population by mail with letters of explanation and assurances of individual confidentiality. The second instrument was developed and validated internally. It was introduced initially by verbal explanation to the administrators of nursing education programs in Alabama. Assurances of individual confidentiality were given (See Appendix A).

Sample: Licensees

The study sample (n = 83) was derived from 124 individual licensees who received a state-funded scholarship funded by the Alabama Special Education Trust Fund administered by the Alabama Board of Nursing between June 1986 and August 1996. The end date for the sample was designated to accommodate expected program completion dates. The last questionnaires were received in 1999.

Sample: Nursing Education Programs

Data were solicited from Alabama institutions offering graduate nursing education programs in fall of 2000. Information requested addressed the cost of

graduate nursing education, need for financial assistance for the students, and perceived value of the state scholarship program.

Data Analysis

Descriptive data analysis methods were applied for quantitative data in both questionnaires. Content analysis for recurrent themes using Krippendorff's (1980) method was applied to qualitative responses.

FINDINGS

Responses from Scholarship Recipients

Characteristics of the Sample

The study sample had several homogeneous characteristics including age, gender, educational preparation, and employment histories. All were Alabama residents while pursuing their graduate degrees, as required by the law (Code of Alabama, 1975). The majority of the participants ($n = 76/83$; 91.56%) were licensed by examination in Alabama. The remainder, 8.4% ($n = 7/83$), were licensed by endorsement. The years in which the participants were licensed ranged from 1962-1996.

A stipulation in the law specified that the post-baccalaureate scholarships should "be distributed, in as much as practicable, throughout the state" (Code of Alabama, 1975 Section 34-21-60). Figure 1 consists of a map showing the distribution of scholarships to the study group as they were awarded geographically from 1986-1996. Twenty-seven counties were represented. Allowing for two missing cases, the majority (62%, $n = 50/81$) of the scholarships were awarded to students residing in the counties with populations of 100 to 500 thousand. In ascending order they were Jefferson (18.5%, $n = 15$); Mobile (13.5%, $n = 11$); Montgomery (12%, $n = 10$); Tuscaloosa (9.8%, $n = 8$); and Madison (7.4%, $n = 6$). All other scholarships were distributed to individuals who resided in rural counties. A second map is included (Figure 2) to show the recipients' addresses listed in 1998-1999. Here 35 counties are represented, five out-of-state and 30 in-state. With no cases missing, the distribution remained fairly constant with the majority residing in counties with populations of 100 thousand or greater: Jefferson (15.6%, $n = 13$); Mobile (12%, $n = 10$); Montgomery (13.3%, $n = 11$); Tuscaloosa (8.4%, $n = 7$); Madison (6%, $n = 5$). Six of the recipients resided in five other states: Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana. The Pearson chi-square analysis was significant, $p = .000$, for counties of residence while the recipients were on scholarship and at the time of the survey.

Figure 1. County of Residence While Receiving Post-Baccalaureate Nursing Scholarship
1986-1997 (n = 81/83)



* One recipient listed Etowah & Elmore counties of residence while on scholarship

**Two recipients listed Jefferson & Shelby counties of residence while on scholarship

***One recipient listed Winston & Marengo counties of residence while on scholarship

#Two recipients did not list county of residence while on scholarship

Figure 2. County of Residence at Time of Survey Post-Baccalaureate Nursing Scholarship Recipients 1998 (N = 83)



Six recipients relocated to counties in five other states: Pennsylvania, Louisiana, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Arkansas

Other demographic data selected for analysis included age, gender, race and marital status. Each of these variables is commonly included in questionnaires for information. Here, they were considered as potentially having a relation to scholarship need.

Table 1 provides a breakout of age data by numbers and percentages of respondents. While specifics of ages were not asked of the study group, the range of greatest frequency for this group was 40-49 with the next greatest frequency in the 30-39 range.

Table 1

Age Ranges of Scholarship Recipients 1986-1997

Age Range	Participants n	Participants %
<30	3	3.6
30-39	23	27.7
40-49*	41	49.4
50-59	15	18.1
>60	1	1.2
Total	83	100.0

* Mode

The age ranges of the study group are reflective of today's total nursing population, both within the state and nationally. In a random sample of 600 Alabama registered nurses taken in the same time frame the study was conducted, the average age was 41.28. In the year 2000, the age range increased to 43.22 for registered nurses.

Table 2 provides data about gender. The data mirror the total registered nurse population.

Table 2

Gender of Scholarship Recipients 1986-1997.

Gender	Recipients n	Recipients %
Female	77	92.8
Male	6	7.2
Total	83	100.0

Using the random sample of licensees, the percentage of males to females was essentially the same as for the general licensed nurse population in Alabama: 6.9% males to 93.1% females. A cross-tabulation of age range to gender evidenced no significant differences between the study group and the general nurse population.

Table 3 references marital status of the responding scholarship recipients. As with age and gender, comparisons were made to a representative sample of other licensed nurses.

Table 3

Marital Status of Scholarship Recipients 1986-1997

Marital Status	n Recipients	% Recipients
Married	59	71.1
Never Married	7	8.4
Divorced	13	15.7
Divorced, Married Again	4	4.8
Total	83	100.0

A majority of the recipients were married. The figures, 71.1% ($n = 59/83$) were comparable with a random sample ($N = 600$) of the general nurse population who were married (67.9%, $n = 387$). Accounting for missing cases, the divorce rate for the study group (15.7%; $n = 13/83$), was similar to that of the general population (16.1%; $92/570$). Numbers of individuals who never married in the study group were somewhat higher between the recipients and the general population: 8.4% ($n = 7/83$) to 10.9%; ($n = 62/570$). Chi-square analysis of data from the study group did not evidence a significant association between age range and marital status.

Racial data were secured according to the following classifications: African American, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, Oriental, and other. Table 4 specifies the breakout. Ninety-four percent of the respondents were comprised of the major southern racial populations, African American, and Caucasian. For purposes of analysis, all other racial categories were collapsed into a composite variable. Scholarships were and continue to be awarded without bias to age, gender, race, and marital status.

Table 4

Racial Composition of Scholarship Recipients 1986-1997

Race	n Recipients	% Recipients
African American	13	15.7
Caucasian	65	78.3
Hispanic	0	0
Native American	2	2.4
Oriental	2	2.4
Other	1	1.2
Total	83	100.0

For purposes of analysis by chi-square, the data on race were collapsed into three categories: African American, Caucasian, and Other (Hispanic, Native American, Oriental and other). As such, the African Americans accounted for 15.7% ($n = 13/83$), Caucasians for 78.3% ($n = 65/83$), and Other 6.0% ($n = 5/83$). Chi-square analysis revealed no significant association ($p < .05$) between race and age range, race and marital status, race and children at home nor race and geographic distribution by residence. A significant association was detected ($p = .003$) between the educational tract selected for graduate study and race. A greater percentage of African Americans, 38.4% ($n = 5/13$) selected education over Caucasians, 23% ($n = 15/65$). The same held true for administration with African Americans at 30.7% ($n = 4/13$) and Caucasians at 9.2% ($n = 6/65$). Ethnic composition of the scholarship recipients was compared to approximately 30,000 registered nurses using workforce data collected in 2000 by the Board of Nursing. A significant association between race and education ($p = .001$) was determined. The higher the degree, the higher the percentage of African Americans (13%; $n = 3,820$) to Caucasians (85%; $n = 24,929$) and Others (3%; $n = 583$).

A majority of the recipients of the scholarships were parents with one or more children at home while pursuing the graduate degree. Table 5 provides a breakdown according to numbers of children at home during pursuit of the degree and at the time of questionnaire completion. Administrators of graduate programs have verbalized difficulties encountered by graduate students in financial matters and other considerations when children are involved. Quantitative analysis of data revealed no significant associations regarding time factors for program completion. Qualitative data minimally connected hardships due to family with comments of gratefulness for the financial support.

Table 5

Recipients' Children at Home While on Scholarship and at Time of Survey

Number of Children	During Time on Scholarship (N = 80)*		At Time of Survey (N = 82)**	
	n Recipients	% Recipients	n Recipients	% Recipients
0	24	30.0	26	31.7
1	21	26.3	27	32.9
2	25	31.3	24	29.3
3	9	11.3	4	4.9
4	1	1.3	0	0
5	0	0	1	1.2

*Missing Cases = 3

**Missing Cases = 1

The numbers of children at home during the time the study group received the scholarship ranged from none to four. Almost 32% ($n = 25/80$) had two children. Pearson chi-square analysis was not significant, $p < .05$, in relation to age of the participants and children at home, although every age range was represented from less than 30 to 60. Congruently, a significant association, $p < .05$, was not detected in relation to children at home and difficulty in completing the course of study, even with a requirement for full-time study while on scholarship. Since completing the program, the number of children at home has not decreased substantially. Only two more reported having no children at home but the number with one at home has increased from 29.3% to 32.9%.

Education Histories and Outcomes

The law is explicit in stating educational requirements to qualify for a "Post-Baccalaureate Scholarship" (Code of Alabama, 1975 Section 34-21-60). Data collected related to educational preparation prior to the scholarship, the degree earned while on scholarship, the educational program attended, and employment following degree completion.

Table 6 references educational preparation prior to matriculation under the scholarship. All of the 83 study recipients provided information regarding education prior to receiving the scholarship.

Table 6

Nursing Education Prior to Scholarship

Degree	n Recipients	% Recipients
BSN	65	78.3
MSN	16	19.3
Other Master's	1	1.2
Total	83	100.0

The baccalaureate degree in nursing is the minimal educational requirement to qualify for the state-funded scholarship. Approximately 20% ($n = 17/83$) of the respondents provided statements that they held higher degrees in nursing, one of whom held the master's degree in nursing education. The majority, 78.3% ($n = 65/83$) held the baccalaureate degree in nursing. These individuals chose a variety of tracks in graduate nursing education as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Nursing Education Prior to Scholarship to Degree Earned on Scholarship Cross -Tabulation

		Degree Earned on Scholarship					
		MSN	MSNNP	DSN	Other	Educ. in Process	Total
NURSING EDUCATION PRIOR TO SCHOLARSHIP	BSN	42	18		5		65
	MSN	5	2	5	3	1	16
	Other Master's			1			1
	Other degrees		1				1
Total		47	21	6	8	1	83

Chi-square evidenced a significant association, $p = .000$, in relation to nursing education prior to entry and the degree sought. Five of 16 individuals who have master's degrees in nursing also indicated they were completing doctoral studies in nursing. Those who completed the graduate degree while on scholarship, 41% ($n = 34/83$), have pursued additional education. Nine percent ($n = 4/34$) stated earning another master's degree in nursing, 6% ($n = 2/34$) earned master's degrees in other fields, 6% ($n = 2/34$) earned doctoral degrees in nursing and 77% ($n = 26/34$) have engaged in other pursuits. Three reported

completing certification programs as family nurse practitioners (FNP) and two stated they were continuing doctoral studies. Others did not specify their pursuits. One stated under "other" that the doctor of nursing science was still in process. One individual marked "other" and wrote in a comment that the bachelor's degree in nursing was the degree earned while on scholarship. These data were linked to corresponding facts related to an inquiry about the year the graduate degree was earned while on scholarship. Table 8 gives an actual breakout of the responses by year.

Table 8

Year Graduate Degree Earned While Receiving Scholarship

	Frequency	Valid Percent
1985	1	1.3
1987	1	1.3
1988	6	7.8
1989	6	7.8
1990	7	9.1
1991	4	5.2
1992	8	10.4
1993	6	7.8
1994	9	11.7
1995	6	7.8
1996	8	10.4
1997	10	13.0
1998	4	5.2
1999	1	1.3
Total	77	100.0
Missing	99	6
Total	83	

The number of degrees granted in a particular year does not correspond with the number of scholarships awarded in a particular year. The law provides for 15 per year but depending on qualifications of applicants, the Board may grant less. Also, individual students' schedules vary according to major and degree being sought. For instance, six respondents stated that they did not receive a degree while on scholarship. Two of these were known to be pursuing the doctoral degree in nursing and had received the scholarship for one of their years of study. Another three stated they did not complete the degree but dropped out for reasons of health or other situations. The greatest number of degrees received from this group of recipients was 10 in 1997. The next highest figure was nine ($n = 9$) in 1994. For three years, scholarship recipients earned

only one degree per year: 1985, 1988, and 1999. A question is raised regarding the 1985 date since this study involved recipients from 1986 forward.

The institutions attended by recipients paralleled geographic distributions of scholarships. Tables 9 and 10 provide the distribution of scholarship recipients 1986-1997 to educational institutions.

Table 9

University Attended by Scholarship Recipients 1986 -1997

Institution	Frequency	Valid Percent
Troy State University	12	14.5
University of Alabama at Birmingham	41	49.4
University of Alabama at Huntsville	7	8.4
University of Mobile	8	9.6
University of South Alabama	11	13.3
Samford University	2	2.4
Other	2	2.4
Total	83	100.0

Table 10

Outreach Program Attended by Scholarship Recipients*

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Jacksonville State University	1	7.1
University of Alabama Capstone College	9	64.3
Other	4	28.6
Total	14/83	100.0

*Figures reflected in Table 9

Table 11 reflects the major areas of academic study the scholarship recipients pursued while in graduate school. Responses were received from 100% ($n = 83$) of the study participants.

Table 11

Major Area of Academic Focus 1986-1997

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Clinical Specialist	27	32.5
Nurse Practitioner	22	26.5
Education	21	25.3
Administration	11	13.3
Other	2	2.4
Total	83	100.0

Although the mode for academic majors was the clinical specialist option, the distribution was fairly even between those who selected the clinical specialist (32.5%; $n = 27/83$), nurse practitioner (26.5%; $n = 22/83$), and education (25.3%; $n = 21/83$). Approximately 13% ($n = 11/83$) selected administration as their major focus. The major areas were more diverse when areas of clinical focus were encountered. Table 12 shows a wide range of clinical options.

Table 12

Clinical Focus of Graduate Study 1986-1997

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Not Applicable	4	4.8
Medical-Surgical	25	30.1
Maternal-Infant	5	6.0
Pediatrics	5	6.0
Geriatrics	2	2.4
Mental Psychiatric	8	9.6
Community Health	4	4.8
Nursing Administration	9	10.8
Other	21	25.3
Total	83	100.0

Medical-surgical nursing set the mode of the focus for clinical options (30%; $n = 25/83$), and nursing administration followed with the second highest frequency (10.8%; $n = 9/83$). Psychiatric or mental health nursing presented third (9.6%; $n = 8/83$). A majority (68%; $n = 15/22$) of those who selected the CRNP option indicated their employment after the graduate degree was as a

CRNP. Likewise, a majority of those who selected the administration option either worked in management or administration ($n = 8/11$). Chi-square indicated a significant association ($p = .000$) between the major area of academic focus and the type position in which they were employed after graduation. The number of cells with expected frequencies of less than 5 ($n = 36$) served as warning to the value of the statistical findings.

Employment Data

Neither the law nor rules delineate requirements or limitations on work for individuals accepted for or retention of scholarships. A work condition is specified for recipients to commit to one year of employment in the practice of nursing in Alabama immediately following completion of the graduate program. Failure to do so requires repayment of the funds. Approximately 93% of the participants ($n = 77/83$) provided data regarding the state in which they were employed after graduation. Accounting for missing cases, 98.7% ($n = 77/78$) stated that they were employed in Alabama the first year after graduation; 1% ($n = 1/78$) relocated to California. These missing numbers are consistent with data provided by participants who stated they did not complete the program or were currently enrolled to complete the doctoral degree.

Data were collected regarding the employment status of the recipients while on scholarship (Figure 3), immediately after completing their degree (Figure 4), and their work settings at the time of data collection (Figure 5).

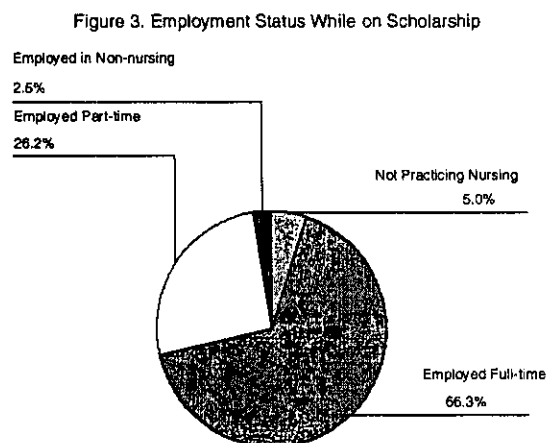


Figure 4. Employment Status First Year After Scholarship

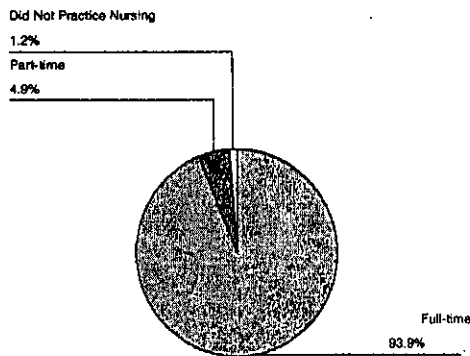
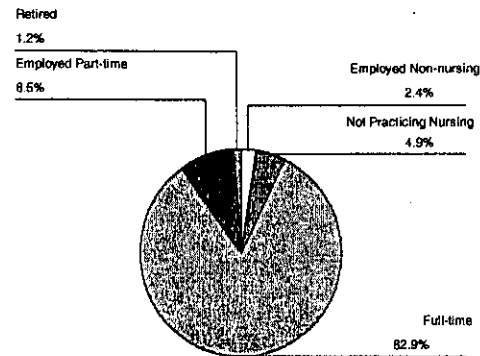


Figure 5. Employment Status at Time of Survey



As shown in Figure 3, a majority (66.3%; $n = 53/80$) of the participants were employed full-time while on scholarship. This represents a 65% increase in the scholarship recipients working full-time since the 1977-1985 study (Fordham, et al). Figure 4 shows that immediately following completion of the degree, the numbers increased (93.9%; $n = 77/82$). Over the years (Figure 5), the percentage of recipients in full-time employment declined (82.9%; $n = 68/82$). Those who did not practice stayed fairly constant at 5% before, and at the time the survey was conducted, with only 1.2% ($n = 1/82$) unemployed. The part-time employment figures corresponded to those of full-time employment. Approximately 26% ($n = 21/80$) were part-time employed while on scholarship; 5% ($n = 4/82$) immediately after scholarship, and 8.5% ($n = 7/82$) at the time of the survey. In the latter group two indicated that they were employed in a non-nursing field and one had retired.

A significant association was not shown between employment status at the time of scholarship and the first year after graduation ($p = .222$). However, a significant association was shown between the first year after graduation and the time of the survey ($p = .000$). This carried across racial lines ($n = 79$ reporting data) when conducting analyses by chi-square as related to the major racial categories represented and employment status. African Americans who reported working full-time one year after receiving the graduate degree (91.7%; $n = 11/13$) also reported full-time work at the time of the survey; $\chi^2 (2, N = 13) = 13.00$, $p = .002$. A similar outcome $\chi^2 (4, N = 62) = 13.00$, $p = .000$ was determined for the participating Caucasians (80.6%; $n = 50/62$). Using a rank for unemployed (0), part-time employed (1), and full-time employed (2), the correlation between employment the first year after graduation and at the time of the study was significant at the .000 level using Spearman's Rho (.428).

A wide range of employment settings were listed by study participants at the time they were receiving the scholarship ($n = 80/83$), immediately following completion of the graduate degree ($n = 82$), and at the time of the survey ($n = 78$). Table 13 provides a comparison of the employment settings across time.

The major categories of employment were education and hospital/in-patient based. Over 50% ($n = 46/83$) worked in the hospital/in-patient setting while on scholarship. This number dropped immediately after graduation to 50% ($n = 41$) and even further, 25.6% ($n = 20/78$), at the time of the survey. In

education, the numbers moved slightly upward then back as follows: at the time of scholarship, 18.8% ($n = 15$); immediately after 26.8%, ($n = 22/82$); and at the time of the survey, 25.6% ($n = 20/78$). The remainder of the participants was sprinkled across the compendium of occupational options such as emergency centers, home health care, physicians' offices and long-term care.

Table 13

Employment Settings of Scholarship Recipients

EMPLOYMENT SETTING	WHILE ON SCHOLARSHIP		FIRST YEAR AFTER		AT TIME OF SURVEY	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Hospital Based	40	50.0	29	35.4	20	25.6
In-Patient Acute	6	7.5	3	3.7	0	0
Inpatient LTC	2	2.5	2	2.4	1	1.3
Inpatient Rehabilitation	2	2.5	1	1.2	1	1.3
Outpatient Clinics	2	2.5	5	6.1	5	6.4
Home Health	3	3.7	3	3.7	1	1.3
In-service or Continuing Education	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.3
Skilled Nursing Facility (Medicare or Medicaid)	0	0	1	1.2	1	1.3
Physician or Dentist Office	2	2.5	6	7.3	7	9.0
School or Student Health Services	0	0	21	25.6	1	1.3
Occupational or Industrial Health	0	0	0	0	2	2.6
Other Clinic/Outpatient Facility	1	1.3	12	14.6	4	5.1
Public Health Agency	3	3.6	4	4.9	5	6.4
Independent Nursing Care	0	0	0	0	1	1.3
Nursing/Health Care Organization or Association	0	0	1	1.2	1	1.3
Nursing Education Program	15	18.8	22	26.8	20	25.6
Other	3	3.8	2	2.4	7	9.0
	80	100.0	82	100.0	78	100.0
Missing Cases	3	3.6	1	1.2	5	6.0
	83		83	100.0	83	

Chi-square was significant for hospital-based work settings, $p = .027$ when cross-tabulations were conducted across all three time categories. A similar calculation was derived for education, $p = .002$.

While receiving the scholarship, almost 50% ($n = 39/79$) stated they were engaged in general staff nursing positions. Approximately 13% ($n = 10/79$) were also employed in situations categorized as "Other" and could be classified as general nursing. Another 20.2% ($n = 16/79$) professed an educator role while

approximately 15% ($n = 12/79$) were in the administrative or management arenas. The remaining participants' positions were sprinkled between research and clinical specialist type positions. Immediately after completing the degree and continuing to the time of the survey, positions shifted considerably for those in staff nurse positions. Several of these shifted into nurse manager roles or remained clinically based as CRNPs. Educators remained fairly stable. Figures 6, 7 and 8 provide graphs of the major categories.

Figure 6. Type Position In Work While on Scholarship

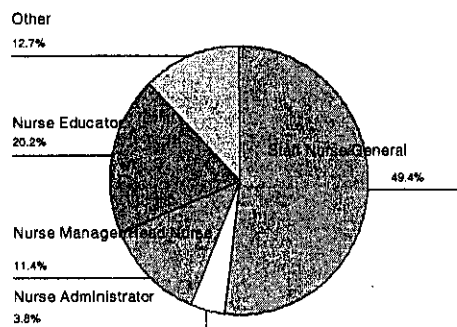


Figure 7. Type Position in Work First Year Post-Graduate Degree

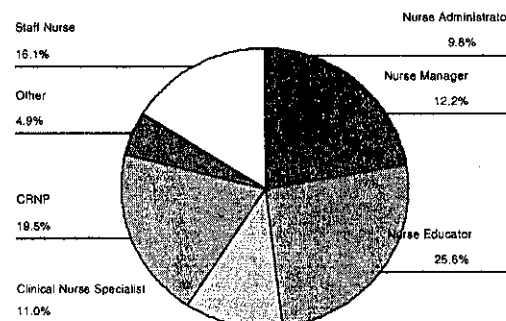
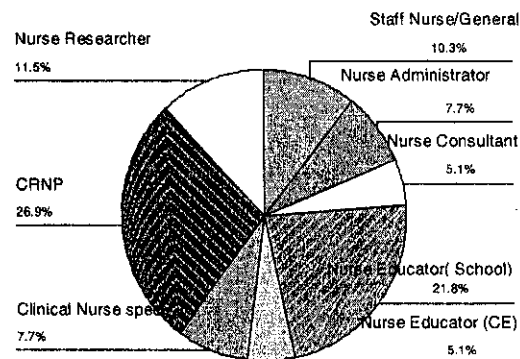


Figure 8. Type Position in Work at Time of Survey

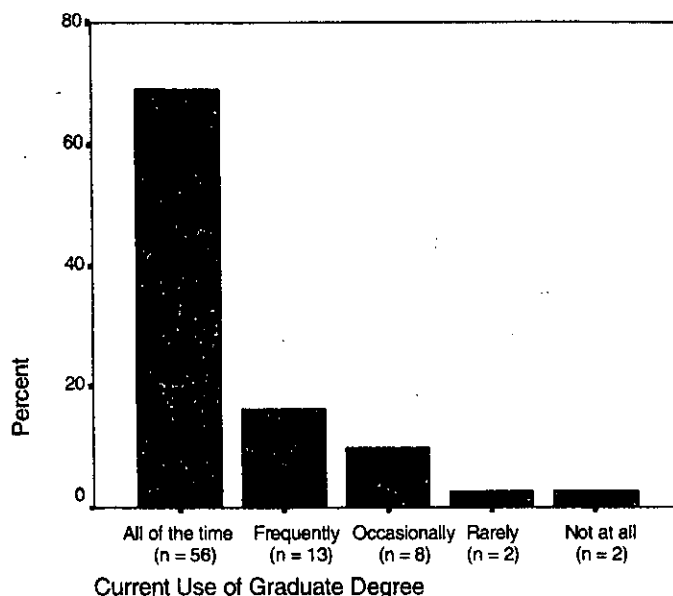


Cross-tabulations were conducted for each time frame for the positions worked. Chi-square was significant for all three levels: first, position while on scholarship and immediately after graduation, $p = .000$; next, positions while on scholarship and positions at the time of the survey, $p = .005$; and third, immediately after completing the degree and at the time of the survey, $p = .000$. Educators, as previously stated, remained fairly constant in their work situations. CRNPs were also stable in their positions after completing their programs.

Opinions About the Scholarship Program

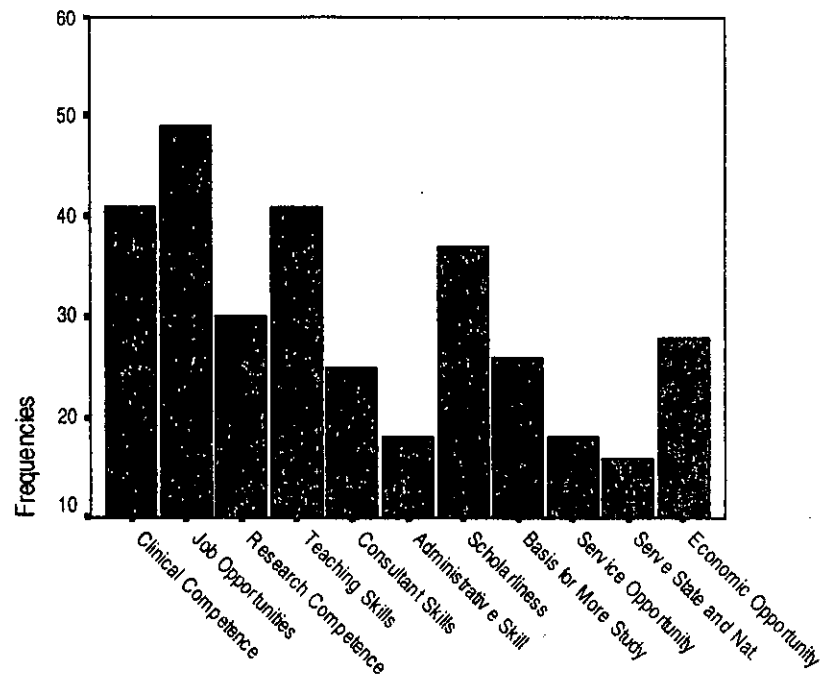
Recipients of the scholarships were asked to provide input regarding the use of the graduate degree and various valuing type questions. When asked about current use of the degree, a majority gave positive responses. Figure 9 is illustrative of their responses.

Figure 9. Use of the Graduate Degree



The question about use of the graduate degree was coupled with a second one that asked about potential improvements in their nursing careers as a result of the scholarship. Almost 98% ($n = 81/83$) of the participants responded to this question. One of the individuals who stated he or she did not use the degree listed five attributes of improvement due to the degree. The other individual stated emphatically that there were no improvements as a result of the scholarship program. Her experiences on the scholarship program were described as legally and professionally threatening. Eleven characteristics for potential improvement were listed. Frequencies of each characteristic are included in Figure 10.

Figure 10. Improvements: Result of Scholarship



Four of the variables rank highest on the improvement list with job opportunities ranking first (61.0%, $n = 49/81$). Clinical Competencies and Teaching Skills were acknowledged as improvements by slightly over 50% ($n = 41/81$) of the scholarship recipients, and improvements in scholarliness were acknowledged by 45.6% ($n = 37/81$).

Opinions about Alabama's investment in the program were addressed in a direct fashion. Table 14 provides frequencies of responses to five categories: worth of the scholarship program to the individual, application to practice or education the minimal expected time, and recommendations for retention or discontinuance of the program. Findings show a positive quantitative response to the scholarship program with a majority of the participants indicating that the program should be continued, and that it has been worthwhile to the participants.

Table 14

Opinions About the Scholarship Program. (n = 83)

OPINION	FREQUENCY			PERCENT		
	Yes	No	Missing	Yes	No	Missing
Worth of Scholarship to the Individual	80	2	1	97.6	2.4	1.2
Scholarship Investment was applied to practice or education at least the minimal expected time.	80	1	2	98.8	1.2	2.4
Discontinue the Scholarship Program	2	79	2	2.5	97.5	2.4
Continue the Scholarship Program	80	2	1	97.6	2.4	1.2

As shown in Table 14 the majority of recipients have also applied their educational investment to practice or education in Alabama. According to verbal comments, those who did not fulfill scholarship requirements repaid the state the amount of money received.

Qualitatively, responses were overwhelmingly favorable toward the scholarship program. Only one respondent gave a statement of dissatisfaction as previously described. Five stated that they did not complete the graduate degree. Their comments are in the following synthesis:

1. "[I was] unable to complete the degree due to disabilities, and had to pay back the monies...but no knowledge or education is ever negated..."
2. "[I] could not complete the degree; paid back the money, now have another degree. I could have done it without the scholarship."
3. "After one year, I quit to join the Navy." (no mention of pay back)
4. "...Found it hard to meet full-time status requirement. Dropped out of graduate school." (no mention of pay back).
5. "[I] received partial scholarship, had to refund some of the money but it was a help."

One individual simply commented "No jobs in Alabama." Another stated that more scholarships are needed. "Doctoral students need more scholarships for longer duration..." The remaining comments presented themes of appreciation often coupled with explanations. These comments give testimony to the positive responses for continuance with the program and are included as entered into the data system (See Appendix B).

Responses from Alabama Graduate Nursing Education Programs 2000 - 2001

Cost of Graduate Nursing Education

The second instrument for this study sought information from educational administrators about the actual cost of graduate education in nursing and opinions about need for the State funded program. Table 15 provides data on cost for tuition and supplies for graduate nursing education. The figures here provide a range and average. They do not take into account that nurse practitioner and clinical specialist programs may be more expensive than the general master degree. The cost of tuition is varied for each location.

Table 15

Cost of Graduate Nursing Education in Alabama 2000 - 2001*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cost of Tuition MSN	6	932	7275	4229	2115
Tuition per Semester Credit Hour	7	115	383	187	95
Cost of Supplies per Semester	6	200	800	429	211

*Figures are rounded to the nearest whole in dollars.

As shown in Table 15, the average cost of graduate education among the seven programs offering the master degree in nursing is \$4,229 per year for tuition alone. Supplies and other expenses drive the cost higher. Cost of living factors such as transportation, childcare and hardware were not assessed, but one may note that the scholarship provided by the State does not meet the mean cost of graduate education for nurses in Alabama.

Financial Assistance for Graduate Nursing Students

Table 16 provides insight into those nursing programs whose students have access to financial aid from sources other than the Board of Nursing.

Table 16

Program Summaries of Financial Assistance Opportunities for Graduate Nursing Students from Sources Other than the Board of Nursing

<u>Program</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>
1	35	12/34
2	41	99/239
3	23	84/371
4	62	118/191
5	60	17/30
6	21	18/88
7	72	45/63

One respondent stated that most financial assistance was acquired through loans. No elaborate statements were made regarding whether they were personal or university sponsored. The number of enrollments corresponds with the degree of financial assistance for students at the graduate level.

Table 17 shows that students in four programs were provided financial assistance that covered all educational expenses (Program 2 at 15%, $n = 36/239$; Program 4 at 35%, $n = 67/191$; Program 5 at 20%, $n = 6/30$; and Program 7 at 9.5%, $n = 6/63$).

Table 17

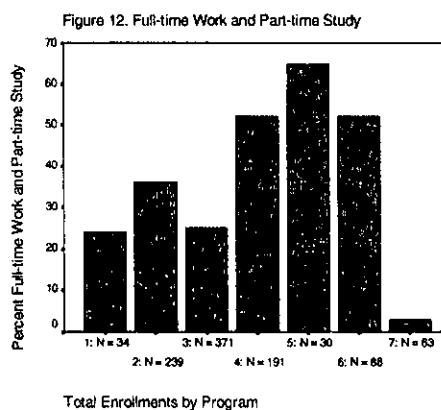
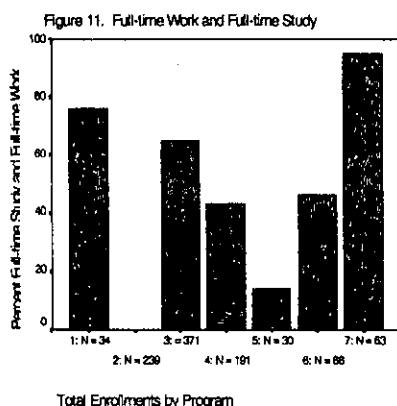
Programs and 100% Financial Coverage for Graduate Nursing Education

<u>Program</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>n</u>
1	0	0
2	15	36/239
3	0	0
4	35	67/191
5	20	6/30
6	0	0
7	9.5	6/63

Three of the programs stated that none of their students received full educational cost-coverage. No explanations were provided as to the form of assistance available by the schools indicating full coverage.

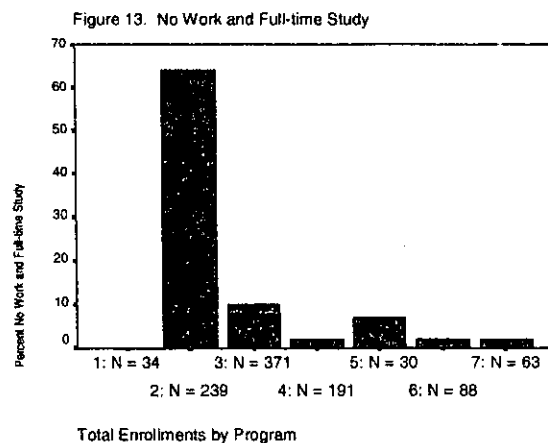
Work and Study Load of Graduate Nursing Students

Figures 11, 12 and 13 provide some insight into the work and study load of the students, by program, while pursuing graduate studies. Figure 11 focuses on full-time work and full-time study, Figure 12, on full-time work and part-time study, and Figure 13 on no work and full-time study.



As shown in Figures 11 and 12, a majority of students enrolled in the responding graduate programs worked while engaged in graduate study. Almost 80% ($n = 809/1016$) worked and attended school. The high end of the range is reflected in School #7 with 95% of the enrollees working full-time and attending school full-time. School #2 carries the low range of 0%. Variables such as distant education opportunities, special schedule accommodation, independent study and individual determination were not explored as to potential cause of the higher percentages. Qualitatively, comments indicated that graduate studies were often coupled with travel of greater than 100 miles and families with small children as well as work. The data in these figures, current to the year 2000, continue to reflect the significantly high percentage of full-time working graduate nursing students. Even though a majority of recipients in the study were married, as are the majority of all registered nurses in the workforce, (69.8%; $n = 21,185/30,324$), the second full-time family income seems to be an imperative as revealed in qualitative comments.

Figure 13 follows the pattern of percentages, showing that smaller numbers of individuals who attend school full-time and do not work.



One program (Program 2; N = 239) outranks all others in the percent of individuals who attend school full-time while not working. Certainly, these data are of interest and warrant further examination.

All of the responding administrators stated emphatically that there is a need to continue the scholarship program. All indicate limited resources for financial assistance. Coupled with the students' comments, the cost of education added to cost of living places a strain on students' ability to complete the educational programs.

Conclusions and Discussion

Literature reports a need to provide additional funding for graduate nursing education to meet an increasing demand for advanced practice nurses across various fields. This includes education, administration, and clinical practice. While a nursing shortage is known, and the demand is great for reducing the shortage, funding had remained low in the nursing profession often serving as a deterrent to returning to school for graduate education.

Alabama has a unique program for funding graduate nursing education. This study evidences perceived benefits for the recipients, graduate programs and the citizens of the state. It demonstrates that a significantly high majority of graduate students not only attend school full-time but they carry substantial workloads outside the home. The study shows that given even partial financial assistance, a majority of those who receive the scholarships finish their programs, return service to their communities, and remain in the state for extended periods of time to practice nursing. Further, the study bears out an

expressed need for additional funding, including a need for additional monies for completing doctoral programs.

The study confirms that the Board of Nursing has awarded the scholarships across rural and urban areas consistently over a ten-year period. Findings show that age, gender, and marital status of the recipients are reflective of the general registered nurse workforce in Alabama. The two major ethnic groups in the Alabama registered nurse workforce are African Americans and Caucasians. Overall, the African American population is comparatively lower than that of the Caucasian workforce population (15.7% to 78.3%). Comparisons of scholarship recipient data with general registered nurse workforce data evidenced the chance distribution of the scholarships by race resulted in a higher percentage of African American applicants receiving scholarships than other applicants. These data complimented the recent (2000) findings of workforce data, which show a greater percentage of African American registered nurses have higher degrees than other registered nurses in Alabama.

Benefits for the recipient, aside from increasing economic opportunities, included increased job opportunities and promotion of scholarliness. Most recipients have assumed leadership, educator, or advanced practitioner roles. Some have sought further education or degrees. The recipients valued these paybacks.

Scholarship monies have assisted graduate nursing students as financial support to higher education has declined. Additionally, the scholarships have helped increase manpower in advanced practice nursing.

From an accountability perspective, some of the findings indicate a need for quality monitoring regarding program completion of participants. Even so, the data show that the majority of recipients have fulfilled the requirements of the law.

A rich agenda suggests future research of variables that contribute to the overall cost of graduate education, ways to increase funding for graduate education, workforce needs and focus of graduate education. The program is deemed valuable by a majority of the recipients and by those responsible for administering graduate education programs.

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APPENDIX A

Instrument

Alabama Board of Nursing Survey of Scholarship Recipients
1987-1997

**Alabama Board of Nursing
Survey of Scholarship Recipients 1987-1997**

There are six sections to this instrument. Part A. includes general demographic information. Part B. relates to professional education and Part C seeks input about your professional work during enrollment in graduate studies under scholarship. Parts D and E relate, respectively, to your employment immediately after leaving graduate studies, and your current work. Part F asks your opinion of the value of the scholarship program. Some of the same selections appear in each section. Please circle the number of the appropriate response or fill in the blank where indicated.

PART A. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

A1. License Information.

_____ Year Licensed in Alabama
_____ Year Endorsed to Alabama (if applicable)

A2. Current Residence.

1. City _____
2. State _____
3. County _____
4. Zip Code _____

A3. Gender.

1. Female
2. Male

A4. Current Age.

1. Under 30
2. 30-39
3. 40-49
4. 50-59
5. 60 or over

A5. Marital Status while recipient of scholarship.

1. Married
2. Never Married
3. Divorced
4. Widowed
5. Divorced and married again
6. Widowed and married again

A6. _____ Number children now at home.

A7. _____ Number of children at home while recipient of scholarship.

A8. Racial/Ethnic status.

1. African American
2. Caucasian
3. Hispanic
4. Pacific Islander
5. Middle Eastern
6. Native American
7. Oriental
8. Other _____

PART B: PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

B1. Nursing Education prior to receipt of scholarship.

1. BSN
2. MSN
3. Other Master's
4. Doctorate other than nursing
5. Other degrees _____

B2. Degree earned while recipient of scholarship.

1. MSN
2. MSN (NP)
3. DSN
4. PhD Nursing
5. Other _____

B3. Year in which the graduate degree was earned while recipient of scholarship _____.

B4. Formal Education since completing the graduate degree while on scholarship.

1. Another master's degree in nursing
2. Master's degree other than nursing
3. Education specialist degree
4. Doctoral degree in nursing
5. Doctoral degree in another field
6. Undergraduate degree in another field
7. Other _____

B5. University attended while a scholarship recipient.

1. Troy State University
2. University of Alabama at Birmingham
3. University of Alabama at Huntsville
4. University of Mobile
5. University of South Alabama
6. Samford University
7. Other _____

B6. If you attended an Outreach Program under the auspices of one of the above listed Universities, please identify the campus.

1. Jacksonville State University
2. University of Alabama (Capstone) in Tuscaloosa
3. Auburn University
4. Other _____

B7. Major area of focus during graduate study under scholarship.

1. Clinical Specialist
2. Nurse Practitioner
3. Education
4. Administration
5. Midwifery
6. Anesthesia
7. Other _____

B8. Major clinical focus during graduate study under scholarship.

1. Not applicable
2. Medical/Surgical Adult
3. Maternal and Infant Nursing
4. Pediatrics (Child Care)
5. Geriatrics
6. Midwifery
7. Anesthesia
8. Mental Health/Psychiatric Nursing
9. Community Health
10. Nursing Administration
11. Other _____

B9. Would you have completed school without this scholarship?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Yes, but with difficulty
4. Did not complete program

**PART C: INFORMATION REGARDING YOUR WORK WHILE ENROLLED AS A SCHOLARSHIP
RECIPIENT**

C1. Employment Status while receiving scholarship.

1. Not practicing nursing
2. Employed full-time
3. Employed part-time
4. Employed in a non nursing field

C2. County of residence while a scholarship recipient _____.

C3. Work Setting while receiving scholarship (If employed in more than one of the settings, please circle the number of the primary work setting).

1. Hospital-based setting
2. Inpatient acute care
3. Inpatient long term care (nursing home)
4. Inpatient rehabilitation unit
5. Outpatient clinics
6. Home health care
7. In-Service/continuing education unit
8. Skilled nursing facility (Medicare, Medicaid)
9. Residential care facility
10. Community/home care
11. Physician/Dentist office
12. School/ student health services
13. Occupational/industrial health service
14. Outpatient surgery
15. Emergency Center
16. Other clinic/Outpatient facility
17. Client's home
18. Hospice
19. Public health agency
20. Independent nursing practice
21. Temporary employment agency
22. Nursing/Health care organization or association
23. Government agency (non-clinical)
24. Medical supplier
25. Nursing education program
26. Insurance company
27. Other _____

C4: Type position related to the preceding question.

1. Staff Nurse/General Duty
2. Office Nurse
3. Nurse Administrator
4. Nurse Manager/Head Nurse
5. Nurse Consultant
6. Nurse Educator (School of Nursing)
7. Nurse Educator (CE)
8. Clinical Nurse Specialist
9. Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist
10. Certified Nurse Midwife
11. Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner
12. School Nurse
13. Nurse Researcher
14. Other Please Specify _____

**PART D: INFORMATION RELATED TO YOUR EMPLOYMENT IMMEDIATELY AFTER GRADUATION
FROM YOUR GRADUATE PROGRAM**

D1: After graduation did you practice in Alabama for one year?

1. Yes
2. No

D2: If yes, what year? _____

D3: If no, did you reimburse the scholarship fund?

1. Yes
2. No

D4: Employment status first year after graduation.

1. Employed full-time
2. Employed part-time
3. Did not practice nursing
4. Employed in a non nursing field

D5: State where Employment first year after graduation: _____

D6: Type agency employed in Immediately after graduation from the graduate program. (If employed in more than one of the settings, please circle the number of the primary work setting).

1. Hospital-based setting
2. Inpatient acute care
3. Inpatient long term care (nursing home)
4. Inpatient rehabilitation unit
5. Outpatient clinics
6. Home health care
7. In-Service/continuing education unit
8. Skilled nursing facility (Medicare, Medicaid)
9. Residential care facility
10. Community/home care
11. Physician/Dentist office
12. School/ student health services
13. Occupational/Industrial health service
14. Outpatient surgery
15. Emergency Center
16. Other clinic/Outpatient facility
17. Client's home
18. Hospice
19. Public health agency
20. Independent nursing practice
21. Temporary employment agency
22. Nursing/Health care organization or association
23. Government agency (non-clinical)
24. Medical supplier
25. Nursing education program
26. Insurance company
27. Other, _____

D7: Type position related to the preceding question.

1. Staff Nurse/General Duty
2. Office Nurse
3. Nurse Administrator
4. Nurse Manager/Head Nurse
5. Nurse Consultant
6. Nurse Educator (School of Nursing)
7. Nurse Educator (CE)
8. Clinical Nurse Specialist
9. Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist
10. Certified Nurse Midwife
11. Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner
12. School Nurse
13. Nurse Researcher
14. Other Please Specify _____

PART E: INFORMATION RELATED TO YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

E1: Current employment status.

1. Employed in a non-nursing field
2. Not practicing nursing
3. Employed full-time
4. Employed part-time
4. Retired

E2: Type agency current employment (If employed in more than one of the settings, please circle the number of the primary work setting).

1. Hospital-based setting
2. Inpatient acute care
3. Inpatient long term care (nursing home)
4. Inpatient rehabilitation unit
5. Outpatient clinics
6. Home health care
7. In-Service/continuing education unit
8. Skilled nursing facility (Medicare, Medicaid)
9. Residential care facility
10. Community/home care
11. Physician/Dentist office
12. School/ student health services
13. Occupational/industrial health service
14. Outpatient surgery
15. Emergency Center
16. Other clinic/Outpatient facility
17. Client's home
18. Hospice
19. Public health agency
20. Independent nursing practice
21. Temporary employment agency
22. Nursing/Health care organization or association
23. Government agency (non-clinical)
24. Medical supplier
25. Nursing education program
26. Insurance company
27. Other, specify _____

E3: Type position related to the preceding question.

1. Staff Nurse/General Duty
2. Office Nurse
3. Nurse Administrator
4. Nurse Manager/Head Nurse
5. Nurse Consultant
6. Nurse Educator (School of Nursing)
7. Nurse Educator (CE)
8. Clinical Nurse Specialist
9. Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist
10. Certified Nurse Midwife
11. Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner
12. School Nurse
13. Nurse Researcher
14. Other Please Specify _____

E4: Current extent of use of your degree received while a scholarship recipient.

1. All of the time
2. Frequently
3. Occasionally
4. Rarely
5. Not at all

E5: Of the following, which have improved as a result of receiving the scholarship?

1. Clinical competencies
2. Job opportunities
3. Research competencies
4. Teaching skills
5. Consultant skills
6. Administrative skills
7. Scholarliness
8. Foundation for further study
9. Opportunity to serve local community
10. Opportunity to serve nursing at the state and national level
11. Economic opportunities
12. Other _____

PART F: OPINION ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

F1: The State of Alabama's investment in the scholarship was worthwhile for me.

1. Yes
2. No

F2: The State of Alabama's investment has been applied to nursing practice and/or education for at least the minimal expected time.

1. Yes
2. No

F3: The State of Alabama's investment in the scholarship program should be discontinued.

1. Yes
2. No

F4: The State of Alabama's investment in the scholarship program should be continued.

F5: Comments: _____

Thank you for responding to this
questionnaire.

APPENDIX B

Qualitative Comments:

Value of the Alabama State Funded
Post-Baccalaureate Nursing Scholarship Program

Qualitative Comments: Value of the State Funded Post-Baccalaureate Nursing Scholarship Program

- Absolutely the best thing the state has done for nursing and the people of Alabama.
- Although I am currently unemployed, the education I received with the assistance of the scholarship has had a positive impact on the nurses who have benefited from my leadership and other administrative skills.
- Appreciated having the scholarship, as it was very helpful while I wasn't working going to school full time.
- Couldn't have gone on to school without scholarship. Greatly appreciated.
- Great program.
- I am so appreciative to the State of Alabama for offering this scholarship. It gave me an opportunity that I may have missed otherwise. I felt very special!
- I am so thankful to have been blessed with the scholarship to pursue my nursing career.
- I began the Master's program in 1994 after being assured I would receive the state scholarship. It was very much needed, as my husband was also attending school at that time. I would not have enrolled that year, I would have waited if not for the ...scholarship.
- I have benefited greatly from the scholarship program, and I was so grateful to receive it.
- I plan to enter graduate school again.
- I really do appreciate being the recipient of this grant. It allowed me to progress in my studies more quickly and provided financial support for the completion of my dissertation and for graduation. Thanks and please do not discontinue this program.
- I received a partial scholarship. I had to refund some of the money but it was a help.
- I will always be appreciative to the Board of Nursing for providing scholarship opportunities for my professional growth.
- I will always be grateful for the Board of Nursing Scholarship
- I would have gotten my MSN but it was very helpful for me to have the scholarship and have more than paid back with services to the rural community of Cullman.
- I would not have received my Master's in Nursing without the scholarship. Thank you for helping me.
- Important scholarship program.
- Many thanks to the ABN for the scholarship program.
- More scholarships are needed. Doctoral students need larger scholarships and for a longer duration of time since doctoral programs require a longer time to complete and necessitate leaves of absence from work on a frequent basis.
- Provided me with freedom from financial concerns while a recipient.
- Re: Question D4 from 1/98 until 6/98. I was employed as an ED-RN full time 32/hrs per wk and part time as a CRNP at another hospital 12-20/hr per wk. Effective June 28 I am now employed full time...as a CRNP in a small hospital setting.
- Receiving the scholarship was a wonderful experience for me. It allowed me to concentrate on my education without being too distracted over the costs of tuition, books, fees, etc. I was able to purchase all of the books I truly needed, instead of ...
- Scholarship was very helpful. Allowed me to focus full-time studies for one year and enhanced my ability to finish the DSN. Thanks!
- Thank you for helping me attain educational and practice goal. I could not have reached had it not been for the scholarship. God bless you and keep up great work!
- Thank you for providing the opportunity to further my nursing career through your scholarship.
- Thank you for taking a chance and investing in my education. I plan to provide you a good return on this investment by being the best Nurse Practitioner/Adult Health Educator I can be. One of my goals this year is to become more active at the local...
- Thank you for the opportunity.
- Thank you. Thank you. God bless you.
- Thanks for the scholarship. It was a great advantage for me.
- The program should definitely be continued.
- The scholarship helped buffer the financial needs during school, so I could concentrate on my program of studies, and not have to work so much. Thank you for making this available.
- The scholarship I received was very helpful for me to pursue my doctorate
- The scholarship makes advanced education a reality for many who would not have the opportunity otherwise. I am grateful.
- The scholarship program is definitely a worthy investment to improve the healthcare of Alabamians by providing advanced practice nurses in communities and clinical situations where otherwise citizens would be without care. I appreciate the scholarship...

- The scholarship program is of great use and would be a discredit to discontinue it.
- The scholarship was extremely beneficial to me. I think it provides opportunity for post-graduate study that otherwise might not be available. In return, I plan to practice in the State of Alabama for many years to come...
- The State of Alabama's investment in the scholarship program made it possible for me to continue graduate school and has improved practice and reaps benefit for the citizens of Alabama on a daily basis.
- There is no doubt that I could not have pursued a MSN without the scholarship. I was working full-time, divorced the month I started my graduate classes (after 22 years of marriage) and had 3 sons 19, 17, and 10 at home. I will be forever grateful...
- This is a worthy program and should be continued and expanded to increase the education level of nurses in Alabama.
- Thanks for the opportunities now afforded to me as a result of the scholarship & completion of my education.
- This scholarship helped me to better myself for my family my community and me. Thank you!
- This scholarship helped meet my goals in nursing.
- This scholarship is very important to nursing quality. I very much appreciate the assistance from the State and the Board.
- This scholarship program is one of the most important things Alabama can do for improving health care for all our citizens. It is also very important to help people who otherwise might not be able to get this education. Thanks for the opportunity.
- Wonderful program.